

MVH: Most Valuable Handicapable

We tend to judge individuals by their outer image. In addition, when we meet someone for the first time, we subconsciously take an overview of their height, the clothes they wear, and how he/she carries their figure. Consequently, we take a visual analysis of how normal the person is compared with the social norm. If we decide that the individual does not meet the social norm because of a noticeable disability or an unpleasant feature, we tend to not associate ourselves with the disabled individual and ignore the individual. Now imagine yourself being raised as a normal child, and joined a football team as an adult. Suddenly, during one of the practices, you were severely wounded and were only given a choice to amputate your right leg. You then go out into the world and experience people staring at you. Strangely, when you stare back at them, they quickly turn their heads and pretend to go on minding their own business. Looking past that, you go talk with friendly acquaintances and all they can talk about is how they feel so sorry that you experienced this unfortunate experience. Instinctively, you tell them that it's fine and that you are over it and want to get on with living a normal life. Unfortunately, the people around you don't acknowledge you as a normal individual and you have to live in this judgmental environment for the rest of your life. This is the life experience of Michael Ishiguzo, a disabled individual on the Amputee Football team in the United Kingdom. With proper support from Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's the "Beholding", we will be able to understand and realize the ignorance towards the disabled society and the "bad staring" that reflects the passive negativity towards the disabled individuals.

Michael Ishiguzo is a disabled individual that was hurt during football practice and caught Gas gangrene in his chin. Unfortunately, the only thing his doctor can do was to amputate his leg in the United Kingdom. In place of his lost leg, Ishiguzo was given an advanced artificial leg that allows him to play in the disabled football league in the United Kingdom. Despite the fact that he lost his leg, Ishiguzo continues on living his live with a positive mindset. He believes that, "everybody is disabled in one way or the another. Physical, mental, spiritual and financial disabilities are all somehow disabilities.” (Berk) and that he does not feel the need to hide his amputated leg or feels any sort of remorse or shame of his own disability. Similarly, in Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s, the "Beholding", she writes about Harriet Mcbryde Johnson disability story. Harriet Mcbryde Johnson accepted her disability, like Ishiguzo, and said, "I've been entirely comfortable in my skin." ( She explains that she is entirely comfortable with herself, but the way people treat and "stare" at her conjures a cumbersome problem for her. This resulted in Johnson to explain her feelings towards the bad staring and good staring theory that Garland-Thomson supports.

To further explain bad staring and good staring, lets look into the picture of Michael Ishiguzo. In the point of view of a good starrer, they can see that Ishiguzo is practicing football. He shows his determination to become better in football despite his disability. Looking closer, they see that his jersey spells Nigeria, which explains that he’s from Nigeria, and has pride for his country. Consequently, they tend to wonder what will become of his future and if he will become a famous disabled athlete. On the other hand, in the eyes of a "bad starrer", they can see that this individual is missing a leg and replaced it with a mechanical leg. They wonder why he is missing a leg and that they are lucky that they have both of their legs. They feel sorry and pity for his misfortune and thank God that they are fortunate enough to have all their limbs intact. In the case of the first scenario, the “good starrer” would treat the disabled individual like they would treat any normal athlete. They would recognize his pride for his country, and acknowledge his potential to become a great athlete. They would look past his disability and would most probably be able to have a normal conversation with him. The second scenario complying with the “bad starrer” is relatively contradicting. First off, the “bad starrer” notices Michael Ishiguzo’s disability. They are curious on how his leg was amputated and have pity on Ishiguzo but can’t relate with Ishiguzo because they believe that it could never happen to them. They cannot get past Ishiguzo’s leg and would either avoid talking or have a hard time engaging in a normal conversation because they cannot relate or believe that they can’t have anything in common with a disabled individual. Looking at these two different scenarios gives us a vague but accurate description and support towards Garland-Thomson's idea of "good and bad staring". They explain the contrasting actions that the normal society does in the presence of a disabled individual.

Unfortunately, society has an inane habit of expressing "bad staring" and not getting to fully understand disabled people. Michael Ishiguzo is a prime example of an individual who lived a normal life but became a handicapped individual after an unfortunate accident during practice. I believe that Michael Ishiguzo has a clear look on how much his world can change by becoming a handicapped individual and he can visually relate to both the normal society and the disabled society. Michael Ishiguzo can understand Harriet McBryde Johnson's statement that," Its not that I'm ugly. It's more that most people don't know how to look at me.” because he encounters visual prejudice with friends and strangers. This new lifestyle dittos the lives of current disabled individuals and further support's Johnson's theory that people do not know how to look or talk towards a disabled individual. If society gets more involved and gained more experience towards encountering the disabled society, people will know how to "look" at disabled individuals and can further relate with them.